



NOAA

PRE-TRIP NOTIFICATION SYSTEM
FOR NEFOP AND ASM

Northeast Fisheries Observer Program & At-Sea Monitoring Pre-Trip Notification System Frequently Asked Questions

General coverage questions

Q: Why doesn't NOAA Fisheries require 100% coverage like is done in other regions?

A: While NOAA Fisheries does require 100% observer coverage for some fisheries, the target coverage of the Northeast Region groundfish fishery will be 30-38% for fishing year 2010. The results from 2010 will be used to determine whether it is possible to characterize discards with less than 100% coverage. The PTNS is designed to allocate the coverage in a way that will obtain a representative sample of all the trips from each sector.

If you change your behavior when you are selected to carry an observer, for example, if you cancel a trip only because you were selected, or change the duration, location etc. of trips when an observer is on board, the observed trips sampled will not be representative of normal fishing effort. Additionally, avoidance of observer coverage may result in other vessels within your sector experiencing higher coverage rates to make up for your lack of coverage.

If NOAA Fisheries determines that fishing year 2010's observer coverage is insufficient to characterize discard (i.e., the observed trips are not representative of the unobserved trips or there is high uncertainty associated with the discard estimate) the observer coverage levels will likely have to be increased in future years. It is not known how much the coverage would need to be increased, though it would be higher than the current coverage, and potentially up to 100%.

Q: How can I find out what my sector's observer coverage rates are?

A: In general, NOAA Fisheries is targeting observer coverage at 30% for common pool vessels and 38% for sector vessels. Coverage is accomplished through a combination of observer and at-sea monitor coverage. Some sectors may opt for additional industry-funded coverage above the target coverage rates. NOAA Fisheries may adjust the target coverage throughout the year to maximize the overall coverage of the groundfish fleet.



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Q: Why is my vessel getting selected for coverage at a rate higher/lower than 30-38%?

A: The target observer coverage was determined based on the activity of the groundfish fleet in past years and the budget allocated to provide at-sea monitoring coverage in 2010. Depending on several factors, including the number of trips taken by the groundfish fleet in 2010, the average length of each trip, and the ability of providers to cover selected trips, NOAA Fisheries may adjust the target coverage throughout the year to maximize the overall coverage of the groundfish fleet. For this reason, vessels should not assume that the targeted coverage rates will be constant.

Additionally, the at-sea monitor selection process attempts to achieve the target coverage at the stratum level, not the vessel level. For groundfish monitoring, the stratum is primarily defined as the sector (common pool), gear and area fished. For example, for all vessels of a particular sector fishing in the Gulf of Maine with gillnet gear, the selection process will attempt to cover 38% of these trips. Because trip selection is random, some gillnet vessels within this sector may be selected for coverage on 51% of the trips, while other vessels may only be selected on 25% of the trips. As more trips are taken within a stratum (i.e., as the fishing year progresses), the random effects will diminish and the coverage across all vessels should begin to approach the target coverage levels.

Q: What is the difference between an At-Sea Monitor and Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) observer?

A: Both monitors and observers have undergone extensive training to collect commercial fishing trip data. At-sea monitors collect similar data to that of observers; however they collect a reduced set of data with an emphasis on quantifying catch (determining weights of kept and discarded fish) with less biological sampling. There is no difference in the laws pertaining to observers and at-sea monitors; they are subject to the same standards with regards to data quality, data confidentiality, safety, and harassment.

Using the PTNS

Q: I received a waiver for a trip, but I did not sail because of weather or a mechanical issue. Do I need to cancel trips in the PTNS even if the trip was not selected for observer coverage?

A: Yes. You should cancel any trip that you do not take, regardless of whether it was selected for observer coverage. NOAA Fisheries is monitoring the PTNS trip declarations and comparing these to VMS activity declarations to identify discrepancies. Failure to cancel trips through the PTNS will result in a greater number of trips being selected for



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observer coverage. You may cancel a trip using your PTNS account online or by contacting the PTNS coordinator.

Please keep in mind that if you need to delay the trip sailing time of a multi-day trip, you may not have to cancel the trip. If you will potentially be departing in the next 48 hours, you may delay the sail date. If the trip is to be delayed long enough for you to provide another 48 hours' notice, please use the website or call the PTNS coordinator to cancel the trip, and then re-notify when the trip plans are known.

Q: Can I declare more than 48 hours in advance of my next trip?

A: Yes. Trips must be declared *at least* 48 hours in advance of the anticipated sailing time; however, trips can be declared up to 9 days in advance of the sail date.

Q: Why can't I notify for 9 days?

A: You are able to notify for trips up to 9 days in advance of the sail date. You are required to give 48 hours' notice. This means that you can notify for up to 7 days at one time, as you would be notifying for the 7th trip 9 days in advance.

Q: Why am I receiving so many emails?

A: When a notification is entered into the system, it either receives a waiver or is selected for coverage. If your vessel receives an initial waiver, it will get only one email, which will contain the confirmation number, the departure date to which it applies, and its waiver status. If your vessel is initially selected for coverage, you will receive an email containing the confirmation number, date to which it applies, and its selection status. Up to 24 hours after your initial selection, you will receive a second email. If an observer provider has accepted the trip, you will receive an email containing the confirmation number, date to which it applies, and its accepted status. If no observers are available to cover the trip, you will receive a secondary waiver; the email will contain the confirmation number, date to which it applies, and its waiver status.

You may also determine your status by checking your PTNS account online.



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Troubleshooting

Q: I can't get onto the website at all – I'm getting a message that says I'm forbidden. What's wrong?

A: The web address is case sensitive. Type fish.nefsc.noaa.gov/PTNS into your browser, ensuring that the "PTNS" at the end is in all capital letters.

Q: I called/emailed in to notify for a trip, and I have not received any notice to my VMS. Why?

A: When you enter your own notifications online, you receive your selection status instantly. When you email or call in your notification, there will be a delay due to the data entry. If it is 24 hours or less before your trip is set to depart and you have still not received any notice to your VMS, please contact the PTNS coordinator with plenty of time to spare before your departure time.

Q: It's 24 hours prior to the scheduled sail time for my selected trip and I have not yet heard from an observer. Why?

A: If you submitted your notification via email or telephone, the entry of your trip will be delayed. The providers have 24 hours from time of entry in which to accept your selected trip. Sometimes trips are accepted late at night, and providers feel that it would be inappropriate to contact the captain at that time.

Q: I called in to notify for a trip. Why hasn't anyone called me back to give me my confirmation number and status?

A: When you call to notify for a trip, your information is entered into the system by the PTNS coordinator. Your trip status will be updated on the PTNS website and an email detailing your status will be sent to your VMS, as well as any additional email addresses that you have provided. If you do not have internet access and cannot check your email accounts, please specify during your notification that you would like to receive a phone call regarding your status.



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Q: I was selected for coverage, but an observer has not yet contacted me. What should I do?

A: Double-check your emails to be sure that you were not issued a secondary waiver for your departure date. Sometimes trips are selected for coverage initially but are not accepted by a service provider. If your trip has been accepted for coverage by a service provider and you have not heard from an observer, contact the PTNS coordinator at least 12 hours before trip sail. The coordinator will contact the appropriate service provider.

If you are at the dock at your scheduled departure time and the observer is not at the dock, you have not heard from the observer, and you have called the observer and gotten no answer, contact the PTNS coordinator. Leave a message with your vessel name, scheduled departure time, and actual departure time. You may then depart.

Q: I have a problem with my VMS – what do I do?

A: Contact the NOAA Fisheries VMS Office at 978-281-9213 or the VMS Support Center at 888-219-9228. You may also send an e-mail at any time to the NOAA Fisheries VMS Office, NMFS.OLE.NE@NOAA.GOV.